NOTES: KM Forum Breakfast Topics, June 3, 2005
Aligning Your Language with Business Goals to Achieve Buy-in for KM Initiatives

Discussion leader was Larry Chait who launched the discussion by suggesting that we could learn from our previous failures to communicate effectively.

Participant 1 led with this problem – (In my organization) selling collaboration always comes down to acquiring another tool, totally ignoring the issue that people in the organization don't collaborate. This has been tackled by breaking activities into smaller projects but that often leaves content experts (who are trying to organize and publish results) outside the process.

Leader – This is a symptom of the project being frustrated so you have to ask: Who can make it happen? What do they care about? If it is project teams, what is going to add value for the project teams?

Group Comments – Honing in on a small specific project puts context around what collaboration means. Focus on what is happening to create the collaborative effort, then document that. Look at where there has been a disaster or embarrassment for the organization. Illustrate that the root case had something to do with failure to collaborate – that is the emotional hook to selling something.

Steps:
- Enumerate and define terms for yourself
- Do the same for management – even invent terms or catch phrases to get the point across
- Frame the discussion in terms of what is important to them
- Prove the value to them piece-by-piece
- Show that you can add value to what the leader sees as value
- You may have to fire people who don't do it right

Find ways to illustrate risk. One way is the compliance issue

Show benefits in small places and keeping finding ways to gain benefits, then tell about how that worked well.

Recommended: book, Spin Selling by Neil Rackham talks about selling benefits in such a personal way to the individual that they are *salivating* for the solution when you get ready to present it.

Find a few ad hoc examples (e.g. Tell what this solution can do to be more profitable based on an extension of the examples that are in place and working.)